



Daily Report

Sub-Saharan Africa

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Burundi

Increased Fighting To Drive Out Diplomats

BR2911153095 Rotterdam NRC HANDELSBLAD
in Dutch 28 Nov 95 p 4

[Article by Koert Lindijer: "War in Burundi Escalates"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] A "creeping genocide" is how one diplomat in the Burundian capital Bujumbura recently described the country's civil war which is turning increasingly murderous. The battle between the Hutu rebels and the Tutsi-dominated Government Army has spread to the whole country over recent weeks, leaving hundreds dead every week. No other African war is at present claiming so many victims. Hundreds of thousands of people have died since the war began in 1993 following the assassination by an Army unit of the democratically elected President Melchior Ndadaye. [passage omitted]

In the north, some provinces have been cut off from the outside world by the violence. This is where Hutu rebels of the National Council for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD) operate under their leader, former Minister Leonard Nyangoma, and a breakaway group led by Kabora Khossan. Amnesty International reports that these Hutu rebels indiscriminately attack Tutsis, whether civilians or soldiers. They are working together with the remains of the former Rwandan Hutu forces in Zaire, who 18 months ago helped slaughter hundreds of thousands of Tutsis in Rwanda.

The extremists on both sides of the conflict now seem to have totally gained the upper hand. Most Tutsis live in the Hutu "cleansed" capital Bujumbura. The Tutsi Army is still busy trying to achieve a Hutu-free belt around the capital. Outside the cities, Tutsis are only to be found in the vicinity of army barracks. When Hutu rebels and Tutsi soldiers come into conflict, this usually results in revenge actions against Hutu villages with the Army burning houses and killing the inhabitants.

The Army does not allow aid organizations to enter the war zones. Aid workers and diplomats report that the growing conflict is now leaving several dozen dead every day with a sharp increase in cases of malnutrition among displaced persons. Extremist death squads, especially Tutsi but also Hutu, direct their attacks at potential leaders, such as the clergy, students, and intellectuals.

Fear and paranoia prevail among all the warring factions. The Tutsis, who for decades controlled the country's politics, economy and armed forces, fear a genocide as in Rwanda. Kill in order not to be killed seems to be the motto in the struggle against the Hutus. Encour-

aged by extremist Tutsi politicians such as former President Jean-Baptiste Bagaza, they are seeking to achieve a permanent separation of the Hutu and Tutsi populations in order to maintain their dominance.

On the Hutu side, the CNDD leader Nyangoma has gained influence as the moderate Hutu politicians in the coalition government do not seem able to defend the interests of the Hutu majority against the Tutsi Army. Members of the CNDD believe the rumor which is much repeated in the area of a plot by the Burundian, Rwandan, and Ugandan Governments to set up a large "Tutsi empire" in the Great Lakes area. In the same way as in the Tutsi Army, the CNDD arouses the fear among its tribal supporters that the enemy is intent on the total destruction of its opponents.

Until recently, the United Nations and donor countries had hoped to be able to control the conflict by striving for more dialogue and appeasement at the highest level. This policy has failed. The coalition government of Hutu and Tutsi parties seems to be hopelessly divided and powerless in this climate polarized by extremists. The moderate Hutu President Sylvestre Ntibantunganya is increasingly losing influence and those around him are working hard to achieve his downfall.

The policy of conflict management was supported by the former UN representative Ould Abdallah. But this Mauritanian left Bujumbura in October, to be replaced by the Moroccan Aziz Hasby. Whereas Ould Abdallah always tried to find a settlement between the opposing parties in any crisis, Aziz recently stated that: "Patience is now at an end." This statement seems to indicate the present weariness of the outside world. The World Bank recently recalled nearly all its staff from its Bujumbura office. The West seems to have given up any hope of a peaceful solution and is now only prepared to grant humanitarian aid, the last thing it can do before it pulls out its diplomats if the situation gets totally out of control.

Security Forces, Gang Clash; 'Over 20' Dead

EA3011152595 Bujumbura Radio-Television Nationale
du Burundi Radio in French 1100 GMT 30 Nov 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The security forces yesterday, in conjunction with administrative authorities and a section of the population, went into battle in (Kihenze) zone on Nyamaboko Hill where assailants were preparing to attack innocent civilians who were unwilling to support their ethnic extermination ideology.

The fighting resulted in the death of over 20 assailants and several people from the armed gangs being injured. There were also deaths on the security forces' side.

The security forces control the situation at the moment, and the people who fled the conflict zone have returned home and are going about their normal daily activities.

Refugees Continue To Return Home From Zaire

EA2911142595 Bujumbura Radio-Television Nationale du Burundi Radio in French 0430 GMT 29 Nov 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Zaire-based Burundian refugees continue to return home voluntarily through the Gatumba border post. Our correspondent, [name indistinct], reports from rural Bujumbura:

[Begin Correspondent recording] According to the head of the Gatumba border post, Mr. [word indistinct] Niyongabo, the border and immigration police department's records show that 60 to 70 people — most of them women and children — are returning home twice a week aboard UNHCR [UN High Commissioner for Refugees] vehicles. The number of refugees, returning on daily basis by their own means, is between 30 and 40, according to Mr. Niyongabo. [passage indistinct] [end recording]

Cabinet Discusses 1996 'Crisis' Budget

EA2811215295 Bujumbura Radio-Television Nationale du Burundi Radio in French 0430 GMT 28 Nov 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] An extraordinary cabinet meeting was held under the chairmanship of the head of state yesterday. A single item was on the agenda. Here is an account of the cabinet meeting by Communication Minister Antoine Baza:

[Begin Baza recording] One single item was on the agenda: A study of the 1996 general state budget bill. [passage omitted] It was agreed that the 1996 budget will be as follows:

Revenue derived from taxes and from other sources is estimated at 48,998,300,000 Burundi francs, while operating expenditure is estimated at 42,953,804,098 Burundi francs; capital expenditure from the budget is 5,234,536,000 Burundi francs; foreign debt to be repaid is estimated at 7,616,067,573 Burundi francs; and internal debt, which is also to be repaid, is estimated at 856,755,747 Burundi francs. Consequently, there is a deficit of 7.7 billion Burundi francs to be met by internal and external funding. The 1996 budget is therefore a crisis budget.

Misery worsened the already prevailing poverty due to the effects of the sociopolitical crisis which our country has been experiencing for more than two years, and an unfavorable price for coffee on the world market. [passage omitted]

Given the present situation, the government has decided on the priorities in allocating resources, priority departments being those connected with security like national defense, territorial administration, and justice. The government is to freeze certain programs, and to reduce its expenditure in a substantial manner. [passage omitted] [end recording]

Mandela's Shoulder Said 'Doing Well'

*MB3011155195 Johannesburg SAPA in English
1529 GMT 30 Nov 95*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] JOHANNESBURG Nov 30 SAPA — President Nelson Mandela spent Thursday [30 November] resting at his Johannesburg home after being booked off work for four days with inflammation of the shoulder.

"He's doing well. He spent time at home relaxing," said Mandela's spokesman Parks Mankahlana. Mandela on Wednesday cancelled all engagements until Monday [4 December] after his doctor diagnosed a minor inflammation in a shoulder joint.

Earlier on Thursday Mandela's political adviser Ahmed Kathrada said: "He must get his rest. There are times when we who work with him must give our support to the doctors." Deputy President Thabo Mbeki has taken over most of Mandela's engagements until Monday, and some meetings have been rescheduled.

'Cabal' Tightening Grip on KwaZulu/Natal IFP

*MB3011062395 Johannesburg THE SUNDAY
INDEPENDENT in English 26 Nov 95 p 3*

[Report by Sam Sole]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] What Inkatha Freedom Party [IFP] insiders call "the cabal" appears to be tightening its grip on KwaZulu-Natal.

The curious thing is its members are all whites: Walter Felgate, Mario Ambrosini, Maurice Mackenzie and Peter Smith form the core of the body, which is seeking to impose the discipline of a "purified" hardline IFP policy on a reluctant province. The four, with Felgate and Ambrosini taking the lead, are the central figures in the daily management committee of the IFP's committee on constitutional and legislative affairs and were appointed directly by Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

The rise of the "gang of four", which coincided with the expulsion of Arthur Konigkramer as constitutional committee chairman, has had a devastating effect on the party. They have:

- Taken over constitutional negotiations in a manner that has alienated the provincial parliamentary committee and delayed the process by months
- Stepped in to override the local government MEC [member of the Executive Council], Peter Miller, on local government legislation;
- Overruled the provincial premier on key issues and have generally alienated most of the provincial caucus. One IFP source says: "Felgate and Ambrosini are the

two 'political commissars' charged with implementing IFP policy. The daily management committee is also looking at the running of the IFP head office. They are attempting to monitor and control every aspect of the party's activities."

Another says: "Felgate would like to oversee everything."

Questions are also being asked about the role of Ambrosini, a conservative Italian constitutional lawyer. He is paid out of taxpayers' money to act as a consultant to Buthelezi in his role as home affairs minister, but he seems to spend little of his time on work related to his ministerial portfolio. He appears to be living virtually full time in KwaZulu-Natal and his work appears to be almost exclusively party-political.

A Democratic Party provincial representative, Roger Burrows, describes the stresses in the IFP as "unbelievable".

"The provincial members of the party hate certain of their IFP colleagues with a frightening passion. It appears that the ear of Buthelezi has been gained by a hardline faction who have put it to the chief that they should be the purified gatekeepers of what goes on.

"They are running up against broad opposition in KwaZulu-Natal, including from the cabinet. Their strongest support comes from Buthelezi himself.

"There is a very hard debate going on about the nature of the IFP: whether it is going to be a modernist, neo-conservative party or a feudalist, back-to-roots movement to defend the interests of traditional leaders," Burrows said.

Viljoen Says ANC Holds 'Absolute Power'

*MB3011193495 Johannesburg SAfm Radio Network
in English 1600 GMT 30 Nov 95*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Freedom Front leader Constand Viljoen says South Africa is ~~already~~ a one-party state with the ANC enjoying absolute power. He says this is not good for a young democracy and warns that the Afrikaner has to be accommodated. General Viljoen says South Africans are being rushed into accepting a new constitution while they are not ready to take on the full responsibilities of democracy. Gen. Viljoen says the Freedom Front is meeting the National Party to try to find common ground on the issue of self-determination.

He told SABC [South African Broadcasting Corporation] Radio News that his party had undertaken to approach all political parties to seek support for the idea of an Afrikaner homeland. He says meetings with the

ANC have already taken place and meetings with the National Party are continuing.

Government Withholds Arms Deal Information

*MB3011061795 Johannesburg SAPA in English
2030 GMT 29 Nov 95*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] CAPE TOWN Nov 29 SAPA — Of the 90 countries which submitted annual reports on their international arms deals to the United Nations arms register last year, South Africa was the only one to withhold information, Parliament's Defence Committee was told on Wednesday.

The register was established in 1992 to promote transparency in international arms transfers in seven categories including main battle tanks and combat aircraft. Laurie Nathan of the Centre for Conflict Resolution at the University of Cape Town said South Africa joined the register earlier this year. Each year the UN secretary-general invited members to voluntarily submit information on the export and import of arms, he said. Nathan, who is helping to draft the white paper on defence, said South Africa had been the only country to censor details of its arms deals in the 1994 annual report. The other 90 countries which responded to the invitation had complied fully with the register's requirements.

South Africa had withheld information on its sales on the grounds that the confidentiality of sales contracts precluded disclosure of information. Nathan said South Africa would only confirm that it had sales in two of the categories but had declined to say how many and to whom. One of the categories was armoured fighting vehicles. "What is surprising is that this information was made available to the UN secretary-general but not to our parliament."

Deputy Defence Minister Ronnie Kasrils told the committee many potential clients might be reluctant to buy arms from South Africa if there was a possibility that their identities could become known. "For example one country may wish to purchase a defence system and they may not want their neighbour to know that they have it.

"We have had discussions on this matter with the deputy president. It is an issue which we are having to look at further," he said.

South African Press Review for 30 Nov

MB3011131895

[FBIS Editorial Report]

THE STAR

'Better Judgment' Expected From Mandela, De Klerk — Johannesburg THE STAR in English on 30 Novem-

ber in a page-20 editorial says: "The silliness of it is beyond comprehension. President Nelson Mandela calls his deputy, NP [National Party] leader F W de Klerk, 'a joke' because of differences over the prosecution of General Magnus Malan and other senior officers of the apartheid era. Because De Klerk does not like to be seen to be making personal attacks on the president, NP justice spokesman Danie Schutte responds by calling Mandela 'a con artist' who cannot differentiate between indemnity and amnesty." THE STAR expects "better judgment from mature leaders. Next time they have differences, Mandela and De Klerk should retreat to their offices and scream at each other as much as they please, but not in public."

BUSINESS DAY

Inkatha Advisers Overrule MEC Miller — The dynamics in KwaZulu/Natal's Inkatha Freedom Party "were highlighted this week by the electoral court hearing on the municipal demarcation of disputed local authorities" and Chief Buthelezi's public rebuke of local government member of the Executive Council, MEC, Peter Miller over proposed local government legislation, says a page-12 editorial in Johannesburg BUSINESS DAY in English on 30 November. It fell to Miller to argue for the exclusion of tribal areas from the Durban metropolitan area, "a manifestly undemocratic arrangement which entrenches semi-feudal rule over thousands of urban people who recognise no allegiance to the chiefs. It is doubtful that Miller's heart was in this. But on tribal matters he must defer to traditional affairs MEC Nyanga Ngubane, who takes his orders from Buthelezi." Buthelezi tells us he is "a humble Zulu peasant" who must abide by party decisions. This is nonsense — nothing can happen in Inkatha without his approval. The weakness of moderates like Miller, and the ascendancy of the hardliners, is the direct result of his influence. So is the weakness of the provincial government, which Buthelezi tends to treat as an extension of his party machine. It is a sad state of affairs when mere advisers can overrule a provincial minister."

THE CITIZEN

Prosecution of Former Minister Malan 'Grave Mistake' — Johannesburg THE CITIZEN in English on 29 November in its page-6 editorial says the ANC "welcomes" the prosecution of former defense minister General Magnus Malan and others and "dismisses fears that the Truth Commission will be turned into a witchhunt against members of the previous government and the security forces." THE CITIZEN warns that the ANC is "making a grave mistake, because in the bitterness it is arousing, particularly among Afrikaners, lies the danger that it will destroy the reconciliation and nation building that President Mandela has made the keystone of his policy."

Angola

UNITA Radio Commentary Criticizes FAA Attacks

MB3011145295 *Jamba Voz da Resistencia do Galo Negro in Portuguese* 1200 GMT 30 Nov 95

[Station commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] How can we believe those who attack us in Soyo? Why are there constant attacks on Soyo lately? Are they aimed at defending economic targets or extending the so-called state administration? Are they promoting peace? We do not think so. As the Angolan Catholic Bishops said recently, peace, law, or any other goal will be harmed more and more by war. Angolans and the population under National Union for the Total Independence of Angola [UNITA] jurisdiction in Sumba commune, Zaire Province, were attacked on 20 and 28 November. UNITA regrets that such events took place and the fact that the UN Angola Verification Mission-3 did not act accordingly. Thus, all the steps that UNITA soldiers had taken in the confinement process in the area are at stake until there are firm guarantees that UNITA members will not be attacked by the Angolan Armed Forces [FAA] assisted by South African mercenaries. UNITA recognizes the Lusaka Protocol and is aware that the extension of the state administration should be implemented in an orderly and peaceful way. However, it will never accept the implementation of the accord by force of arms. There should be dialogue and rigor in the implementation of responsibilities assigned to each side; the contrary will not be tolerated as of now.

UNITA also expects a UN monitoring post to be established in Sumba commune, South African mercenaries to be repatriated, and FAA troops to be confined to barracks simultaneously with UNITA soldiers as soon as possible. To pledge peace by the power of arms is not convincing to anyone. As long as soldiers are not confined in barracks, mercenaries are not withdrawn, and civilians are not disarmed, no one will believe in peace, and as the Angolan bishops said, they are the ones who will not believe in peace. Since all Angolans are interested in peace, let us establish peace without weapons.

Mozambique

Minister Briefs Parliament on RSA Farmers

MB2911081795 *Maputo Radio Mozambique Network in Portuguese* 1730 GMT 28 Nov 95

[FBIS Translated Text] In the Assembly today, the government was forced to give details about the planned arrival of Afrikaner farmers in Mozambique. Agriculture and Fisheries Minister Agostinho do Rosario told deputies that the program for the settlement of South

African farmers, known as Mosagrius, is designed to provide orderly assistance to South Africans who want to invest in Mozambique, especially in the agricultural sector.

Rosario noted that the program is not aimed at promoting immigration by South Africans to some parts of the country. He said the government has not negotiated any South African settlement or homeland in Mozambique, let alone the sale of any portion of our land.

Rosario added that land titles will not be issued directly to South Africans, but through a Mozambican joint venture that will be the legal guardian of those titles, thereby upholding the investment and land laws.

On the subject of the duration of the land titles, Rosario said that, in view of the need to develop basic agricultural infrastructures, including dams for irrigation and electricity, grain elevators, roads, and social complexes, it was recommended that such titles should be valid for 50 years. He said the implementation of the program and the arrival of the first Afrikaner farmers depends on the conclusion of the accord and financing for the establishment of basic infrastructures.

Certain sectors of society have demanded a referendum on the plan to attract South African investors to the agricultural sector. Rosario said a referendum is unnecessary because, quote, the people endorsed foreign investment when they debated and approved the Draft Constitution Bill and the Investment Law, unquote.

Dhlakama Opposes Farmers' Arrival

MB2911142895 *Maputo Radio Mozambique Network in Portuguese* 1030 GMT 29 Nov 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Afonso Dhlakama, leader of the Mozambique National Resistance [Renamo], has accused the Mozambican Government of signing an accord on the arrival of South African farmers in Mozambique without consulting the multiparty Parliament, the opposition, or the population in general. Dhlakama was speaking in Cuamba, Niassa Province, today. In a telephone interview with our correspondent in Quelimane, Andre Jonas, the head of the Renamo Presidency's Press Department, quoted Dhlakama as having said this in a mass rally he addressed in the second-biggest city in Niassa Province.

Afonso Dhlakama, who was reacting for the first time to the arrival of South African farmers in Mozambique, explained to Cuamba residents that during the apartheid era in South Africa the Boers had farms blacks were not allowed to enter. Dhlakama said the same situation may occur in Mozambique in the near future. He noted that the arrival of South African farmers in Mozambique

may not be a problem today but after 50 years all the land will be occupied by them. Dhlakama said, quote, all the agricultural land will be occupied by foreigners, and Mozambicans will work for them as servants, unquote.

The Renamo leader today toured Cuamba Rural Hospital and the local railroad station, which is part of the Nacala Corridor. Tomorrow, Dhlakama is scheduled to leave the Chiuta administrative region, Mecanheles District, and will later tour Mandimba, Ngauma, Lichinga, Muembe, Sanga, Mavago, and Majune Districts.

Namibia

Relations Along Border With Angola Discussed

MB3011181795 Windhoek DIE REPUBLIKEIN
in Afrikaans 24 Nov 95 p 6

[FBIS Translated Text] The government announced yesterday that Namibia's borders with Angola in the Kavango region will remain closed despite the peace process under way in Angola, and even though there is very little chance of conflict resuming between the MPLA [Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola] and UNITA [National Union for the Total Independence of Angola].

Namibia and Angola are considering amending the agreement on free movement of goods and people across the joint border in the 120-km free zone so the size of the zone can be reduced.

This was said on 23 November by Defense Minister Phillemon Malima, who attended the meeting of the Joint Commission on Defense and Security between Namibia and Angola with the minister of home affairs, Jerry Ekanjo [title as published], and a large security delegation.

The Namibian delegation — including among others, the security adviser to the president and National Intelligence Service head, Peter Tsheehama; and Defense Force chief, General Dimo Hamaambo — was positive about the latest situation in Angola. They spoke on arrival at the international airport.

Malima said that the second meeting of the commission, established in May 1990 but existing only in name because of the Angolan civil war, was extremely successful.

In addition to discussing the situation along the common border between the two countries, the commission also paid attention to the growing wave of violence in the subregion now. They decided on certain mechanisms to stop, among other things, smuggling of weapons, vehicles, drugs, and ivory between the two countries. Communication structures between the two countries

also were strengthened to encourage more effective cooperation.

"We wish the two parties in the Angolan conflict good luck in their peace attempts. We are convinced there will be no more war in Angola," Malima said at a news conference on 23 November.

According to him, the Angolan Government and UNITA are pleased with the peace process and there are indications that the civil war is a thing of the past.

He also pointed out that the process of confining UNITA forces to bases began when the commission started its work in Luanda, an indication that the Angolan peace process is irreversible.

On the possible amendment to the agreement on the free movement within the 120-km zone along the border, Malima said a proposal will be made to the two governments. According to Malima a review of the agreement is needed because the zone now is too big to launch effective joint police operations.

The operations will be aimed at the prevention and curbing of crime, especially against international smuggling syndicates that use Namibia as a route for the smuggling of weapons, drugs, and ivory to South Africa.

Concerning the Kavango border, closed since 29 September 1994 by President Sam Nujoma, Malima said the closure will remain in force until the Angolan Government has established its own structures, especially in Cuando Cubango Province bordering Namibia.

Swaziland

Parliament Said Discussing Return of Parties

MB3011111095 Mbabane THE TIMES OF
SWAZILAND in English 30 Nov 95 pp 1, 32

[Report by Nkululeko Dlamini]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Lobamba — Parliament is reportedly discussing whether or not the country should re-introduce political parties which were banned over two decades ago.

It was established yesterday from sources that one of the senior princes has moved, during the ongoing joint House caucus, that the nation should go for a "national referendum" to decide this issue.

A referendum is the process of referring a political question to the electorate for a direct decision by general vote. Parliamentarians have been locked in secret deliberations for three consecutive days this week and are evasive of divulging precisely what is being discussed behind closed doors.

This has led people to make speculations about the meetings. An inside source said parliamentarians were openly discussing the national referendum issue during the lunch break and some even indicating what they would vote for if it was called.

The source said the senior prince (whose name is deliberately withheld) went as far as mentioning that he was sure people will vote against the reestablishment of political parties in the country, thus keeping the Tinkhundla [traditional community councils] system of governance more firmly in place.

Yesterday's caucus was attended by the Deputy Prime Minister, Dr Sishayi Nxumalo. The Minister of Transport and Communications, Mr Ephraim Magagula was also present. When asked for an explanation, Mr Magagula jokingly said: "You should not worry, it is our discussion, you will be informed later. Just keep quiet," he said and slipped into the House of Assembly where the discussion is being held.

The Attorney General Sipho Zwane said he was not in a position to disclose what is being discussed because he is not chairing the meeting.

Zambia

Opposition Leader Says Chiluba Zairian National
MB2911102295 London BBC World Service
in English 0530 GMT 29 Nov 95

[From the "Network Africa" program]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] [Announcer Rick Wells] The future of Zambia's President Chiluba has once again been thrown into the spotlight by the thorny issue of citizenship. THE POST newspaper there claims to have documentary evidence that President Chiluba was born in Zaire. This directly contradicts the president's declaration that he was born in Zambia, the requirement under the new draft constitution for him to stand again as president. In light of this, the leader of the newly formed Liberal Democratic Front, Rodger Chongwe, has called for President Chiluba's impeachment. On the line to Lusaka, I asked him why:

[Begin recording] [Chongwe] According to the records that have been given to us and which we have seen, he is a Zairian.

[Wells] You say you have records. Exactly what evidence do you have?

[Chongwe] The evidence of birth — the date of birth and the place of birth and his parentage.

[Wells] You have actually physically got a birth certificate or something?

[Chongwe] Yes.

[Wells] In your possession?

[Chongwe] Well, it may not be in my possession, but I have seen what is an authentic certified copy of a birth certificate signifying that he was born in a mission hospital in Zaire and that his parents named therein are not Zambians. Now, what you should realize is that in Africa, particularly in the part of Africa where I come from, there are no records of births of persons, particularly those who were born in the 1940s. Our president was born in 1943, but he happens to have been born in a mission hospital, where they meticulously maintained records of births of children, whether they were black or white. In this particular case, they recorded that he was born of Zairian parents and his given names are completely different from the name that he uses today.

[Wells] If what you are saying is correct, that actually has quite serious bearings on President Chiluba's position. Some might say you are just raising this whole thing, you are stirring up the mud to try and get him barred from running in next year's presidential elections.

[Chongwe] That is very far from the truth, because the whole scenario in Zambia was actually started by Mr. Chiluba himself, who wanted to deport the first president of this country, and subsequently wanted to deport other nationals in the country. Hence, there had to be some investigations to find out whether these people were actually born where he stated they were born and also where he himself, as president of this country, was born.
[end recording]

Benin**Francophone Center Attacked; Suspects Arrested**

*AB2611163395 London BBC World Service
in English 1705 GMT 25 Nov 95*

[From the "Focus on Africa" program]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The authorities in Benin were quick to make arrests following last week's rocket attack on a convention center in Cotonou where the Franco-African meeting is due to be held next month. It seems to be connected to the earlier arrest of a number of military men, but now top politicians in the regime of former President Kerekou have had their collars felt. From Cotonou, Karim Okanla reports:

[Okanla] More suspects have been detained following the recent field rocket attack on the international conference center in Cotonou. According to reliable sources, Retired Lieutenant Ibi Esho, a former intelligence chief and ambassador to Moscow, was arrested yesterday for suspected involvement in a military coup attempt. A former minister of the previous Kerekou administration has also been detained. His name is Soule Dankoro and the authorities believe that he might have a hand in the missed rocket attack. Another primary suspect, whose arrest has made headline news is Lolo Chidiac, a retired but still influential businessman. His detention comes as a surprise to many here because just a few days ago, Lolo Chidiac stated in a newspaper interview that he was no longer interested in politics.

Meanwhile, huge security exercises were held today in Cotonou ahead of the Francophone summit scheduled for 2 December. Heavily armed security forces blocked access and exit roads inside and outside town creating more chaos in the traffic. The authorities are obviously taking no chances to guarantee the security of their illustrious guests among whom are UN Secretary General Butrus Butrus-Ghali, and French President Jacques Chirac.

Police Recover Stolen Rockets

*AB2211105895 Cotonou Office de
Radiodiffusion-Television du Benin Radio in French
0615 GMT 22 Nov 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] The Beninese Government is now on the right track with regard to its investigations into last week's rocket attack on the Cotonou International Conference Center. The distress noted right after the attack is now making way for a glimmer of hope. The security forces, which consider the attack an attack on their honor, did their best to expose the attackers and render them harmless. Their all-out mopping-up operation has resulted in the recovering of a consignment

of ammunition. According to Defense Minister Desire Vieyra, of the 10 rockets that had been stolen from the Ouidah barracks, the security forces were able to recover seven, including the two fired at the International Conference Center. According to the defense minister, investigations are still being carried out openly in conjunction with the public prosecutor. A number of people have been arrested, while others are under watch. Minister Vieyra added that the outcome of the investigations would be published as soon as they were completed.

Two More Arrested

*AB2311224795 Dakar PANA in French
1751 GMT 23 Nov 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] Cotonou, Benin (PANA) [date-line as received] — Retired Lieutenant Colonel Soule Dankoro and businessman Michel Lolo Chidiac, both aged about fifty, were arrested in Cotonou yesterday evening, military sources said this afternoon. According to the same sources, the two men, who are well-known in Benin's political circles, were arrested on the heels of the arrest of military deserters implicated in the rocket attack against the conference center of the Sixth Francophone Summit on 15 November.

The same sources also said that the arrested soldiers, who allegedly carried out the attack, have reportedly revealed under interrogation that they used a covered truck belonging to Col. Dankoro to convey the weapons stolen at Ouidah Camp, 40 km from Cotonou, on 5 March 1994. The stolen weapons included 10 rockets.

Col. Dankoro, who served as minister several times in General Mathieu Kerekou's regime, resigned from the Army this year to run in last March's legislative elections, whereas he should have gone on retirement in October. He was beaten. He is suspected of embezzling money.

As for Michel Lolo Chidiac, a Lebanese-Beninese, he has already served a prison term for organizing violent disturbances during the March 1991 presidential elections at Parakou in northeastern Benin. He was then supporter of former President Mathieu Kerekou. After spending two years in prison, he was freed under a presidential pardon granted by President Soglo in March 1993. He is accused of providing motorcycles to those who allegedly attacked the francophone conference center with rockets. Still according to the same military sources, he was in contact with foreign supporters in two of Benin's neighboring countries.

Since the official announcement of the arrest of military deserters involved in the attack and the death of one of them, Orougatta, in a shootout on 20 November,

the government has not made any statement as the public prosecutor is investigating the case. However, in a news conference today, Adrien Ahanhanzo Glele, the chairman of the Technical Committee on Francophone Affairs, stated that the country's security will be ensured by "land, naval, and air military cover" during the summit slated for 2-4 December.

Liberia

Refugees in Guinea Return as Butrus-Ghali Visits

*AB3011082595 London BBC World Service
in English 1705 GMT 29 Nov 95*

[From the "Focus on Africa" program]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] So, Butrus-Ghali has also briefly been in Liberia today. Even before his arrival, there was high excitement among the Liberian refugee community in Guinea. Whenever something happens that makes it look as though peace is there to stay in Liberia, the refugees, deeply unhappy with their conditions in Guinea, rush to the border to go home. Each time, they get turned back by border guards. Hearing of the secretary general's imminent arrival, they stormed the border again. This time, quite a few, including a number of journalists, got across as our correspondent, Jonathan Peyley reports in this telex from Ganta, on the Guinea border:

Journalist John Kollie, who is amongst the new arrivals, told me that he and other refugees, used unofficial crossing point to return to Liberia in order to be home in time for the UN secretary general's visit and also to witness the deployment of peacekeeping troops in rural Liberia. Kollie told me that although the new influx into Liberia was triggered by Butrus-Ghali's visit, the main reason is the endless suffering of Liberian refugees in Guinea.

Many of the returnees come from Camp (Nomla), which is one of the largest and most poverty-stricken refugee camps in the area. According to reports, at least five people die everyday from malnutrition. Refugees say the Belgian branch of Medecins Sans Frontieres which used to work in Camp (Nomla), has now pulled out in apparent protest at the continued closure of the Liberian-Guinean border.

One refugee, a musician who fled to Guinea when fighting broke out at the NPFL [National Patriotic Front of Liberia] headquarters in Gbarnga last year, said that more than 20,000 Liberians in the Guinean forest region are struggling to return home, but because the border is still closed, only people without children can easily strike deals with Guinean and NPFL border guards to sneak into Liberia at night.

Visit Received 'With Disappointment'

*AB3011091595 London BBC World Service
in English 0630 GMT 30 Nov 95*

[From the "Network Africa" program]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The UN secretary general, Butrus Butrus-Ghali, yesterday paid a three-hour visit to the Liberian capital. His visit comes at a time when West African leaders have been calling for a greater UN financial commitment to the Liberian peace process. But, if Liberians expected the UN chief to arrive with news of any such commitment then their expectations were in vain, as Budu Kaiser reports from Monrovia:

[Begin Kaiser recording] The UN secretary general's visit was received with disappointment by many Liberians desperate for practical international backing for their peace process. Most people had hoped his visit would have seen increased UN assistance for peacekeeping operations in Liberia. Some said his three-hour visit was not enough to allow him assess the critical needs of the country coming out of six years of civil war.

Butrus-Ghali told a news conference, international assistance to Liberia will depend on the factions' commitment to the peace agreement signed in August in Nigeria. He said Liberian factions must overcome the crisis of credibility because they have broken several peace agreements. He said throughout his discussion with faction leaders and Liberian officials he sounded the message that he wants to see progress on the ground to be able to convince the international community to help Liberia. He, however, appealed to the international community to maintain, what he called, the momentum. We must assist Liberia, we are brothers and sisters and belong to one family. His visit comes two weeks before the African peacekeeping troops are due to be deployed throughout the country, but Ghali's statement fell short of any UN assistance which is badly needed to carry out this task. [end recording]

Butrus-Ghali Calls Visit 'Successful'

*AB3011101695 Monrovia Radio ELBC in English
0900 GMT 30 Nov 95*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] United Nations Secretary General Dr. Butrus Butrus-Ghali has described his one-day official visit to Liberia as successful. Dr. Butrus-Ghali said a new momentum has been created in favor of the peace process in Liberia as a result of the visit.

Speaking at the James Spriggs Payne Airport shortly before his departure, the UN secretary general said the purpose of his visit to maintain a momentum of the Abuja agreement, the New York pledging conference, and the recent UN Security Council decision to increase

UNOMIL's [UN Observer Mission in Liberia] strength to 160.

The UN secretary general, who had closed-door discussions with the State Council at the Executive Mansion, described the meeting as fruitful. He said the councilmen told him that they as a collective presidency have the political role to continue the peace process. The council also told him to tell the international community that the Liberian peace process is irreversible. For this, he said it is necessary to help convince the international community to provide more assistance and support to end the Liberian conflict. Dr. Butrus-Ghali said he is leaving Monrovia very optimistic because the council confirmed and affirmed that they want peace. However, the UN secretary said assurance of more support can only be forthcoming provided Liberians demonstrate more concrete commitment to continuing the peace process.

The UN secretary general's visit to Liberia is part of a tour of several West African countries. He visited Ghana where he held talks with President Jerry Rawlings, ECOWAS [Economic Community of West African States] chairman, on the Liberian peace process. While in Monrovia yesterday, the UN secretary general also held discussions with the ECOWAS representative and the ECOMOG [ECOWAS Cease-Fire Monitoring Group] high command as well as UNOMIL officials. Although no information on the discussions was released, they are believed to have centered around the joint role of the UN and ECOMOG in implementing the Liberian peace process.

NPFL, ULIMO Accord To Reunify Nation

*AB0112104295 Monrovia Radio ELBC in English
0900 GMT 1 Dec 95*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The NPFL [National Patriotic Front of Liberia] and ULIMO [United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia] have signed a memorandum of understanding aimed at reunifying the country, creating free movement, and guaranteeing security. Councilman Charles Taylor signed for NPFL, while Councilman Alhaji Koromah signed for ULIMO. The signing ceremony was witnessed by Dr. George Boley, a member of the collective presidency.

According to an Executive Mansion release, the memorandum of understanding takes immediate effect and the two organizations have agreed to establish a buffer zone which shall span from the town of Gbalatua in Bong County to the town of Gatlotia in Lofa County. According to the memorandum, militias of the two forces shall henceforth refrain from entering [this] third buffer zone with arms and ammunition or warlike materials, thus

allowing the free movement of people and commerce without intimidation of any form or harassment.

The document says respect for the neutrality of ECOMOG [Economic Community of West Africa Cease-Fire Monitoring Group] by the two organizations and the immediate deployment of its troops in NPFL- and ULIMO-controlled areas are to be strictly adhered to. The two organizations further agreed to guarantee the full protection and give maximum cooperation to relief organizations throughout areas under their control. Unlike other previous arrangements, it says, in which constant violations have been reported, the current memorandum indicates that violators of any of the provisions shall be turned over to UNOMIL [UN Observer Mission in Liberia] and the leaders of the NPFL and ULIMO for appropriate actions. To buttress this move, the two organizations have agreed that the national disarmament and demobilization commission should monitor and supervise the observance of the buffer zone regulations on sight.

Meanwhile, front line commanders in the respective areas of the two organizations have been called upon to observe all provisions of the memorandum for its effective implementation.

State Council Announces Additional Appointments

*AB2511160595 Monrovia Radio ELBC in English
0900 GMT 25 Nov 95*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The State Council has made additional appointments with immediate effect. An Executive Mansion release named those appointed as (Cadric Domba), deputy managing director for operations, Monrovia Transit Authority; (Ben Marshall), assistant minister for planning, Ministry of Transport; and (Maxwell Paul), deputy minister for research and planning, Ministry of Internal Affairs. Others include Wellington Sworming, assistant minister for social services, Ministry of State for Presidential Affairs; and (Francis Mehun), assistant minister for transport, Ministry of Transport.

NPFL Officers Accuse Taylor of 'Ritual Murders'

*AB3011191595 Paris AFP in French
1738 GMT 30 Nov 95*

[FBIS Translated Text] Monrovia, 30 Nov (AFP) — Thirty generals and majors of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia [NPFL], a Liberian armed faction, today exposed Charles Taylor, mainly accusing him of engaging in "ritual murders."

In a communique issued by the independent bi-weekly, THE NEW DEMOCRAT, the group, which comprises

16 generals and 14 majors, stated that they had been "abused and deceived," adding that they were "ready to testify to the ritual murders carried out by Taylor."

The 32 men, who accuse the NPFL leader's entourage of being made up of "immigrants' sons," add that they want "to disengage themselves from the war and surrender to the Economic Community of West African States Cease-Fire Monitoring Group," the West African force deployed in Liberia since 1990.

Questioned by AFP, Charles Taylor's spokesman Reginald Goodridge, stated that "those accusations were a carpet of lies and pure propaganda," describing those who made them as "relegates."

Mr. Taylor — son of an American and a Liberian woman — who had launched the civil war in Liberia in December 1989, is one of the six members of the Council of State — a transitional collegial presidency — put in place on 1 September in Monrovia following a peace accord signed by the country's seven armed factions.

Niger

Army, Tuareg Rebels Clash in Tahoua

AB2711130195 Paris AFP in French
1140 GMT 27 Nov 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Niamey, 27 Nov (AFP) — There were minor clashes between the national Army and former Tuareg rebels on 24 November, in Tahoua region, 400 km north-east of Niamey, local authorities announced today. Souleymane Kane, the region's prefect who was contacted on telephone by AFP, said that there were mere "skirmishes," with the Army suffering no casualties.

Attaher Abdoulmoumine, a representative of the Armed Resistance Organization [ORA], the rebels central organ, has asserted that there were "several dead and injured" during the clashes. According to the prefect, an Army patrol has been dispatched to the Tahoua region to convince the former rebels to end the activities of an "anti-security body" established "without the government's agreement."

The rebels "have arrested several persons they suspected of being members of armed groups or Army informants," the prefect added, stressing that government forces are "controlling" the region. For its part, ORA has accused the Army of "encircling and attacking a unit" of ORA charged with fighting insecurity in the region. These are the first incidents involving directly the Army and ORA since the signing of a peace agreement between the two parties in April. [passage omitted]

ORA Blames Army for Peace Process Suspension

AB2711140395 Niamey Voix du Sahel Network
in French 1200 GMT 27 Nov 95

[Statement by the Armed Resistance Organization in Niamey on 27 November; read by the movement's spokesman, Mohamed Ausik Kriska]

[FBIS Translated Text] The Armed Resistance Organization [ORA] has taken it upon itself to inform national and international opinion about the following: In its concern to contribute to the fight against insecurity in Niger, the ORA set up a security company to eradicate this phenomenon in cooperation with the defense and security forces to facilitate the implementation of development projects. It was in this connection that the ORA sent a mission to the area of (Tchao) in the Tchín-Tabaradene where there has been disturbing banditry. The government authorities were officially informed about the presence of this mission in the area, the people comprising it, and the logistics being used.

On 21 November, after a long exchange of viewpoints between the prime minister, the high commissioner for peace restoration, and ORA officials on the principle of the return of the ORA members to their base, the government, in spite of ORA's acceptance of this principle, ordered the elements of the Niger Armed Forces [FAN], already on the spot, to disarm or destroy the ORA members. This attack resulted in people having disappeared and civilians being arrested and tortured in Tahoua.

In the face of the seriousness of the situation, the ORA is denouncing the violation of the cease-fire and the agreement by the government side. The ORA holds the government responsible before national and international opinion for the consequences. Considering the serious threat to the peace agreement, the ORA demands the withdrawal of the FAN from this area, the release of the arrested persons, and the immediate cessation of human rights violations reported in this area. The ORA is demanding the convening of an extraordinary meeting of the Special Peace Commission.

While waiting for the holding of this meeting, the ORA is suspending its participation in the various commissions on the implementation of the terms of the peace agreement.

Issued in Niamey on 27 November.

Signed, the ORA

Government Comments on Suspension

*AB2811141395 Niamey Voix du Sahel Network
in French 0545 GMT 28 Nov 95*

[Government communique issued in Niamey on 27 November]

[FBIS Summary] Since the signing of the 24 April peace agreement, the conflict area was faced with the problem of mopping up residual violence. In Article 12, the agreement stipulates that only the government is empowered to eradicate this phenomenon. Following the different meetings held by the Special Peace Committee [CSP], the government was given a period of one year to eradicate the scourge. "Contrary to this decision, at its last congress, the Armed Resistance Organization [ORA] unilaterally decided to create and operate a security company in the area." The ORA's attention was drawn to the fact that the creation of such a company was untimely because it constituted an enormous impediment to the implementation of the peace process. "Despite this warning, the ORA defied the government by making its armed men mount patrols. Thus, under the pretext of looking for bandits, the ORA men committed atrocities among the population.

"The army command therefore decided on 21 November to send a mission to the area because there was an increasing number of complaints by farmers. In the morning of 22 November, the reconnaissance patrol was attacked by the ORA and a member of the Niger Armed Forces was wounded." After an exchange of fire, the ORA decided to withdraw. The members of the ORA were given the possibility to escape so that they could understand the message that the area which they were in was out of bounds to them.

"Contrary to the casualties announced by the media, the result of the clash is as follows: On the ORA side, one dead, one prisoner, three Land Rovers abandoned on the spot, and a large amount of ammunition seized during a search. There was one wounded on the side of the Niger Armed Forces." Whatever the case, no one can — as ORA maintains — express the desire to take part in the eradication of banditry — which, by definition, is relative — by building shelter on the ground.

In conclusion, on account of the above, the question is who is responsible for the cease-fire violation? "Is it the ORA who deliberately violated the agreement despite the many appeals at the CSP meetings or is it the Armed Forces who only applied the agreement?" It is clear that it is only the government of a country that is responsible for the security of its citizens. "However, the government has not definitively closed the door and

is reminding the ORA that it can resume the negotiations at any moment within the framework of the CSP."

Nigeria**Government Thanks 'Majority' for Support**

*AB3011214795 Lagos NTA Television Network
in English 2000 GMT 30 Nov 95*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Federal Government says it is grateful for the support which the majority of Nigerians had given it at this trying period in the nation's existence. The chief of general staff, Lieutenant General Oladipo Diya, assured that it will consider the suggestions being made on how to move the nation forward.

[Begin Diya recording] The government is grateful for the support and understanding received from broad sections of the nation for our political transition program, which has been carefully elaborated to take full account of our special circumstances so as to ensure that what eventually emerges is a lasting democratic system. We also renew our thanks to those members of the international community who have made useful suggestions that we intend to take into consideration. [end recording]

Youth Rally Supports Government in Ogoni Issue

*AB3011215095 Lagos NTA Television Network
in English 2000 GMT 30 Nov 95*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The international community has been asked to handle Nigeria's case with greater understanding. Making the appeal today was the Amalgamation of Nigerian Youth Associations during its solidarity march in Lagos. The spokesman for the association, Mr. Charles Eddet, said that while the association appreciates the concern of foreign countries about a quick solution for Nigeria's problems, sanctions will further worsen a situation they are trying to salvage. He said that they are happy with the way the government is handling the Ogoni issue and they ask for a fair hearing for the government and people of Nigeria before a decisive action is taken. Otherwise, the nation and government will be denied a fundamental right. He promised to hand over copies of letters they have written on the issues to embassies, to the Lagos State director general for political administration, Dr. Segun Oyefunle, to be passed on to the administrator, Colonel Olagunsoye Oyinlola. Dr. Oyefunle commended the youth for being peaceful. He said what Nigeria needs at this time is peace and he promised to deliver their letters to the administrator. [video shows youth carrying placards with General Sani Abacha's picture]

Opposition Plans To 'Disrupt' Transition

AB3011192095 Paris AFP in French
1653 GMT 30 Nov 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Lagos, 30 Nov (AFP) — The Campaign for Democracy [CD], the active wing of the Nigerian opposition, today in Lagos expressed its intention to mobilize all the forces of the opposition to disrupt the transition program of the military which has announced its withdrawal from power in October 1998.

At a news conference in Lagos, the CD warned that politicians who would go by this program and participate in the various elections envisaged by the program, leading to the holding of presidential elections in the autumn of 1998, will be the "target" of its activists.

"Our activists were asked to consider as legitimate the attacks on these opportunity-seeking politicians," the CD explained. "We are conscious of the fact that the responsibility of ridding the country of the tyranny (of the military regime) is, first and foremost, the responsibility of Nigerians," the CD said alluding to the recent statement of South African President Nelson Mandela calling on the Nigerian opposition to intensify its struggle inside the country.

Without giving any further details, the CD added that an action program "was in progress" to force the soldiers to relinquish power.

The CD, which is made up of some 40 prodemocracy and human rights organizations, led protests against the military regime following the cancellation of the 12 June 1993 presidential elections by the former administration headed by General Ibrahim Babangida.

Sierra Leone

UN's Butrus-Ghali, Strasser Discuss Elections

AB2911203595 London BBC World Service
in English 1705 GMT 29 Nov 95

[From the "Focus on Africa" program]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The UN secretary general, Butrus Butrus-Ghali, has paid a visit to Sierra Leone on his trip through West Africa. He came from Ghana, and it was very much a flying visit. He didn't even leave the airport before jetting off to Liberia, but he did have a meeting with Captain Strasser to find out how the return to democracy was going. It is fraught with problems, not least the continuing civil war, and suspicions that Capt. Strasser doesn't really mean it. From Freetown, Victor Sylver telexed this report:

Butrus-Ghali emerged from an hour-long discussion with Capt. Valentine Strasser to say that he has now been convinced that the military government is genuine

and is serious about plans to hold multiparty elections in February next year. The meeting between the UN secretary general and the Sierra Leonean head of state took place at Lungi International Airport. Butrus-Ghali only stayed in Sierra Leone for one-and-a-half hours. When he was asked why UN peacekeeping troops have not been deployed in Sierra Leone, he said Sierra Leone is among 50 war-torn countries currently competing for the attention of the United Nations.

He said the United Nations does not have enough money to satisfy all these demands. Butrus-Ghali said Berhanu Dinka, the UN special envoy to Sierra Leone, is still in Freetown trying to get the RUF [Revolutionary United Front] and the government to sit down together at the negotiating table. The UN secretary general said he believed negotiations would eventually take place, adding that he will be visiting the Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso to see what role they could play in bringing the two sides together.

Further Details of Meeting

AB2911225295 Freetown SLBS Radio in English
2000 GMT 29 Nov 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The UN secretary general, Dr. Butrus Butrus-Ghali, has said that the United Nations will do whatever has to be done to ensure peace, and a successful transition to democracy in this country. Dr. Butrus-Ghali made this statement this morning during his stopover visit to Sierra Leone at the Freetown International Airport, Lungi. He said a (?special) conference will be held in New York tomorrow, at which the United Nations will obtain from the international community the support which will help the people of Sierra Leone to achieve democracy.

Dr. Butrus-Ghali said the United Nations will not be able to participate in the reconstruction of this country without a stable and democratic system. He described as constructive his discussions with the head of state, and spoke of his trust in the government's transition program to democracy.

Responding to questions at the ensuing press conference, Dr. Butrus-Ghali said the United Nations is confronted with the multiplicity of conflicts the world over, and that the presence of UN peacekeeping troops in crisis countries costs a lot of money. He said donor countries are no longer ready to offer the necessary financial assistance. He, however, stated that his visit was a way of mobilizing opinion to facilitate his role to convince donor countries to pay attention to what is happening here.

On what the United Nations has done to talk to authorities in Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast on the

alleged training of RUF [Revolutionary United Front] rebels in those countries, the UN secretary general promised to discuss the issue with the two countries as a way of finding a lasting solution. He said there are all indications that Sierra Leone will become what it was in the past.

In his welcome address earlier, the chairman of the NPRC [National Provisional Ruling Council] and head of state, Captain Valentine Strasser, described Dr. Butrus-Ghali's visit as a historic event. The head of state expressed the hope that their discussions will be fruitful and meaningful to both the UN system, and Sierra Leone.

On his arrival, Dr. Butrus-Ghali inspected the guard of honor mounted by the Lungi Garrison of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Sierra Leone. Members of the Supreme Council of State, secretaries of state, and representatives of UN agencies were also at the airport to welcome the UN secretary general.

Army Chief Favors Peace Through Dialogue

*AB2911185295 Paris AFP in English
1621 GMT 29 Nov 95*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Freetown, 29 Nov (AFP) — The military government in Sierra Leone Wednesday [29 November] said it believed the conflict with rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) could be resolved through direct dialogue rather than violence.

"The government still believes in holding out the olive branch because it believes and is convinced that the

ultimate solution to the country's problem can only be achieved through direct dialogue and not by continued violence," said Defence Chief of Staff Brigadier Julius Maada Bio during a meeting aimed at improving relations between the military and civilians here.

Since the RUF started the civil war in March 1991, more than 10,000 people have been killed and almost half the west African country's 4.5 million inhabitants were forced to leave their homes.

The meeting followed two incidents involving soldiers allegedly harassing civilians in the capital, Freetown.

"As the coming elections approach, when the Armed Forces will cede power to a democratically elected civilian government, it is now time to close ranks and eschew peace, understanding and cooperation," said Bio.

"We must understand that even with a democratically elected (civilian) government, the war will not come to an abrupt end if the RUF continues to maintain its intransigence," he added.

Kadi Sesay, chairman of the National Council for Democracy, a non-governmental group set up to advise civilians of their constitutional rights, said at the seminar "it is essential for the army to be subordinate to the democratic society." "The people should determine the purpose for which the military will be used," she added.

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